



SCOPING NOTICE

May 24, 2017

Re: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks Land Proposal

To Whom It May Concern:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) is working with The Trust for Public Land (TPL) to conserve twenty-one sections (approximately 13,398 acres) of Weyerhaeuser property located northwest of Whitefish, Montana, that we refer to as the Whitefish Lake Watershed Project. The proposal entails TPL purchasing the entire property from Weyerhaeuser. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) would provide funding for the purchase of five of the sections (approx. 3,180 acres) identified on the attached map. In exchange for their funding, BPA would retain a perpetual conservation easement on the five sections to conserve important native fish habitat within the Swift Creek watershed. The BPA portion of this proposed project would serve as partial mitigation for fisheries losses resulting from construction of Hungry Horse Dam.

As part of this larger conservation strategy, FWP is proposing to purchase a perpetual conservation easement (CE) from TPL on the remaining sixteen sections (approx. 10,218 acres) of land. Through this Scoping Notice, FWP is seeking initial public input on the proposed purchase of a conservation easement on sixteen sections and requests the public's help in identifying any issues, concerns, or other information that FWP should consider when evaluating this conservation opportunity.

Project Location

The Whitefish Lake Watershed Project is located approximately nine miles northwest of Whitefish, Montana. It is surrounded on the west, north, and east by Stillwater State Forest managed by the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). On the southern border are lands that will be retained by Weyerhaeuser.

FWP Project Specifics

FWP proposes to purchase a conservation easement on sixteen sections (approx. 10,218 acres) in two phases as shown on the attached map. The purpose of the easement would be to protect critical wildlife habitat in perpetuity, continue sustainable commercial forest management, and prevent development of the property. Public recreational access would continue under the terms of the proposed conservation easement in a manner similar to current allowed uses. Several winter recreational uses are currently licensed on the property by Weyerhaeuser and would be allowed under the terms of the conservation easements.

TPL is facilitating this entire project by providing funding, project coordination, and interim ownership to help make this very complicated transaction successful. They do not intend to be a long-term owner of this property and would negotiate with a third party to purchase the land subject to the conservation easement terms and conditions.

Project Funding

The FWP-held conservation easement would be funded using a combination of grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Habitat Conservation Plan Land Acquisition Grant, HCP), U.S. Forest Service (Forest Legacy Program, FLP), FWP (Habitat Montana), and private funds provided by TPL. A requirement of the Forest Legacy Program is to maintain working forests through sustainable forest management.

Project Goals

The primary objectives of the FWP-held conservation easement currently being proposed on sixteen sections (approx. 10,218 acres) are to:

- Conserve important fish and wildlife habitat;
- Continue sustainable commercial forest management; and
- Maintain public recreation access into the future.

The primary objectives of the BPA-held conservation easement currently being proposed on five sections (approx. 3,180 acres) are to:

- To protect, conserve, and as appropriate, to allow for the restoration or enhancement of fisheries habitat on the property; and
- Maintain public recreational access into the future in a manner that does not impact fish and wildlife conservation values.

FWP asks that comments on this proposal be submitted to either of the following addresses by June 7, 2017:

Kris Tempel
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
490 North Meridian Road
Kalispell, MT 59901

or ktempel@mt.gov

If you have any questions regarding this project or the Scoping Notice, please contact Alan Wood (awood@mt.gov; 406-751-4595).

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Williams', is written over the 'Sincerely,' and extends across the line for the name and title.

Jim Williams
Supervisor, Region One

